From February 2016
(Volume 63)

Back home and having a great time. This 'Bakery Bus' trip was a surprise organised by Ben & Tammy and took us around London while we were served with a really fantastic afternoon tea. It was a hoot

We returned to the great Dales Country Hotel in Sheringham, Norfolk in February and it was unexpectedly sunny. Food and room were great

We walked for hours on the sandy beach and the tide came in so fast behind us that we only just made it back in time

The spectacular colours of the beach pebbles,

Kitchen renovations in February 2016

March 2016 .

Overnight at The Old Registry in Haworth Yorkshire

...a delightful setting on the Yorkshire moors, but we couldn't have picked a worse time

...one minute we were walking on the moors in windy, cold, but sunny weather...

...and then we were sliding all over the road with vehicles abandoned all around us. A totally frightening experience which seemed to last for ever before we managed to get off the moors onto main roads

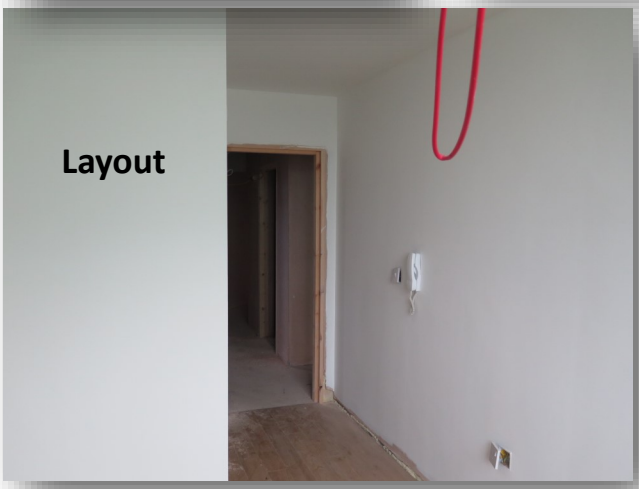
Grattan House, Bradford in Feb 2016 during refurbishment

Main entrance

Shower

Layout

Toilet and wash
-hand basin


Layout

View from window

In March 2016 we spent a fun few days with Ivor and Judy at their great villa in Alicante, making the most of every moment

One of three pools on the complex

So good to be able to enjoy blue skies and lovely sandy beaches in March

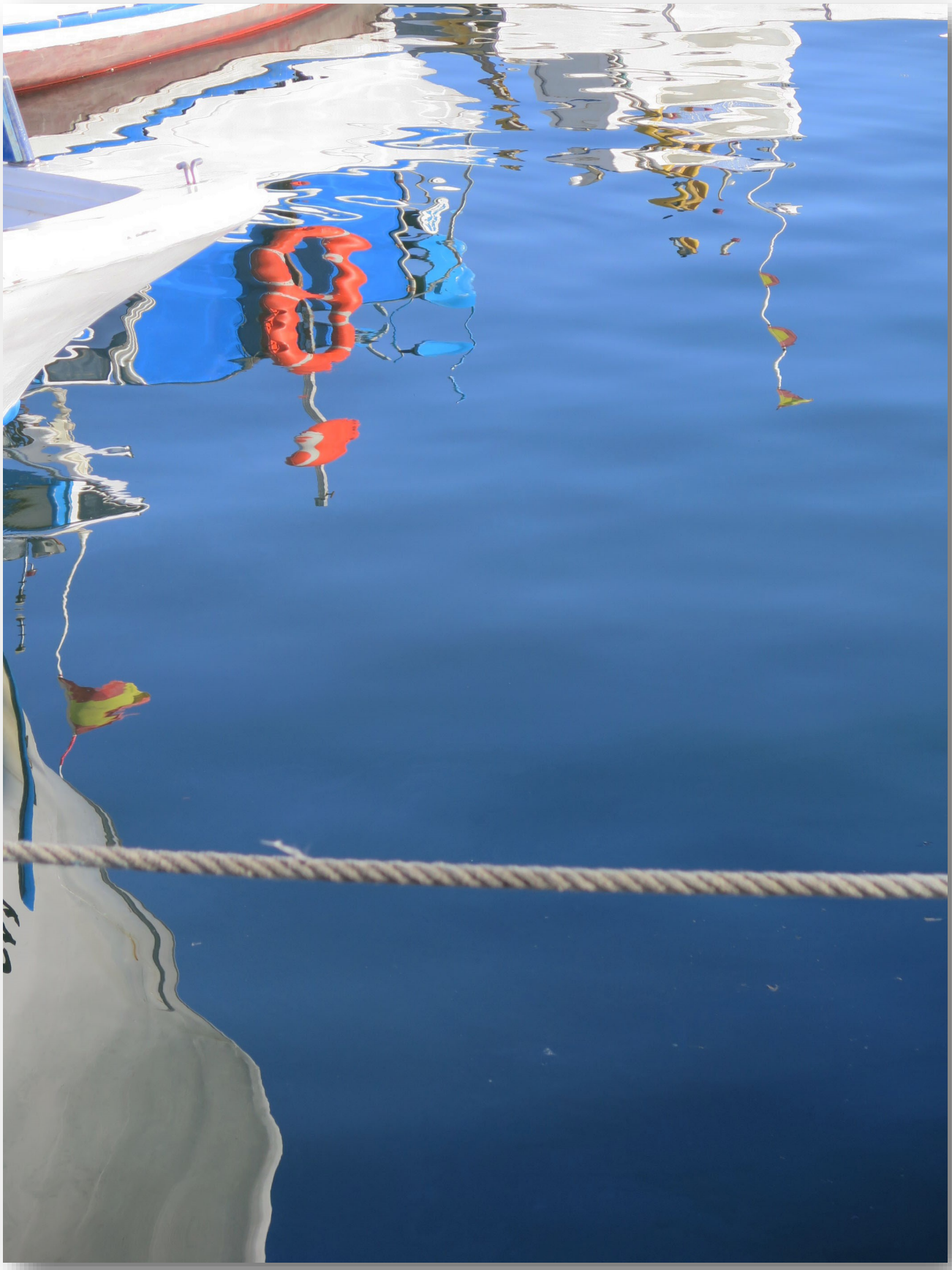
Shoreline

The long boardwalk through the nature reserve down to the beach

We took this glass-bottomed boat over to Tabarca, which is an islet located in the Mediterranean Sea, close to the town of Santa Pola, in the province of Alicante

Before the season starts the island was deserted and we had fantastic freshly cooked local fish in the shade in the small square

The small part of the island with the cross is reserved as a nature reserve and some rare plants are found there



This beautiful early evening light above the burger joint and local supermarket was too good to miss

"What time does the show start???"

Is there anything that those wonderful cranberries are not good for ???

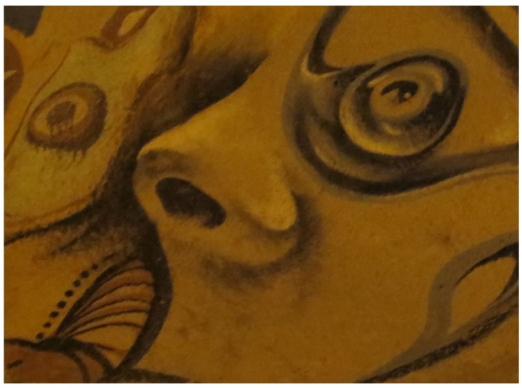
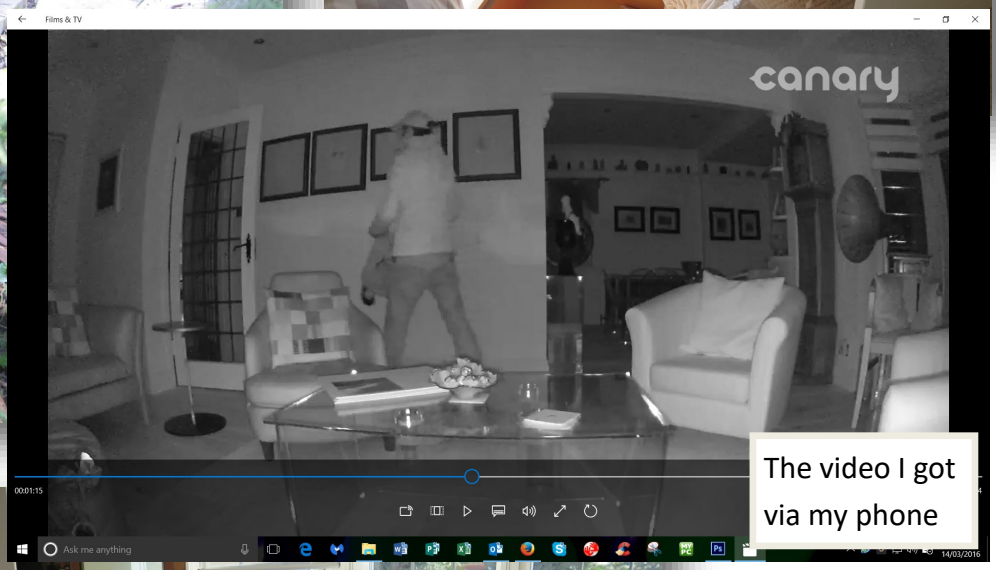
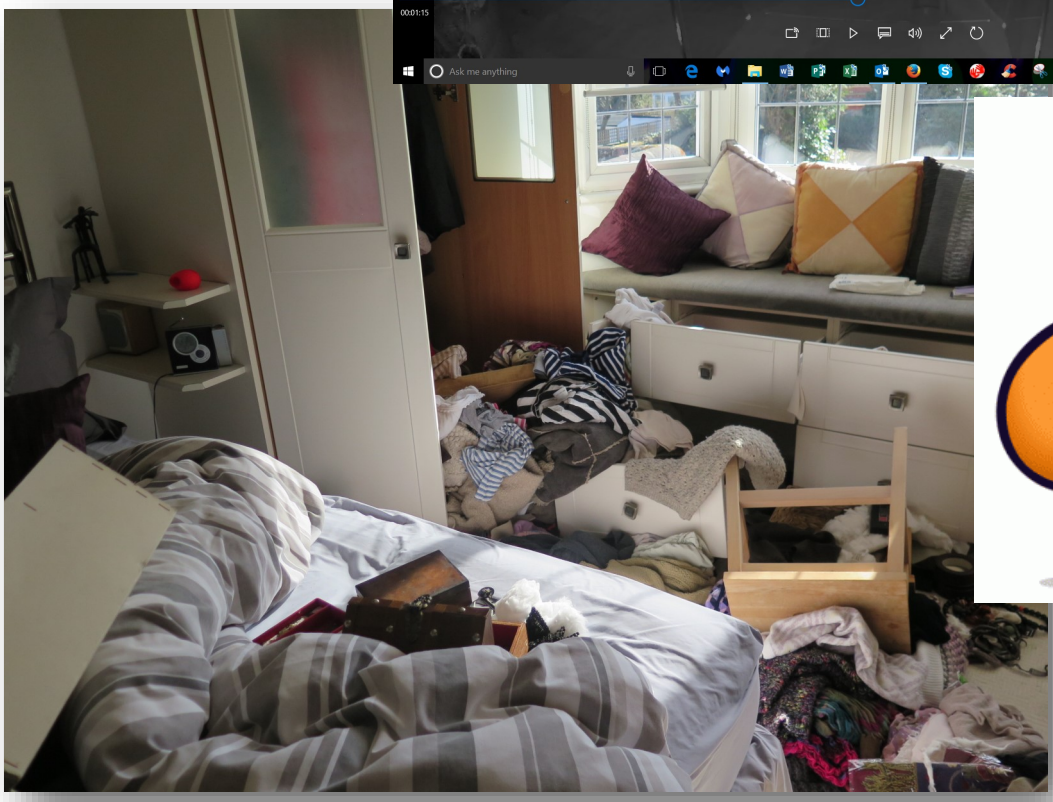


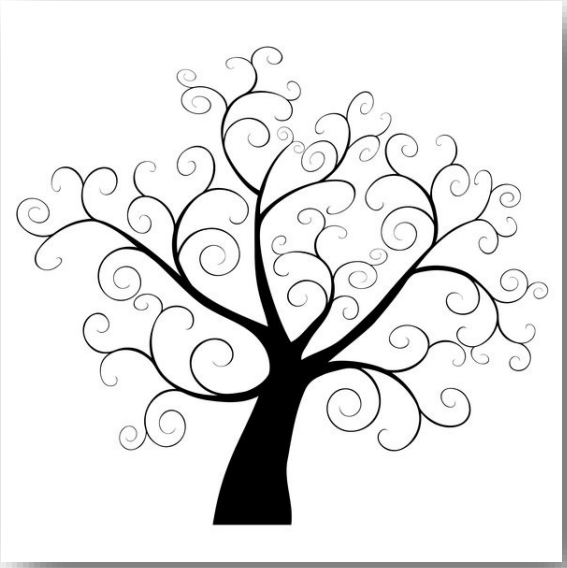
Photo History

While we were in Spain with Ivor & Judy this thief (caught on my video) was busy ransacking our house

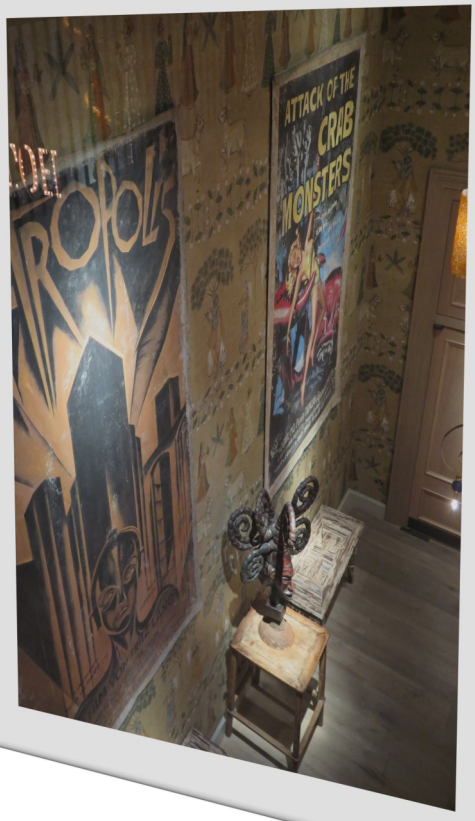




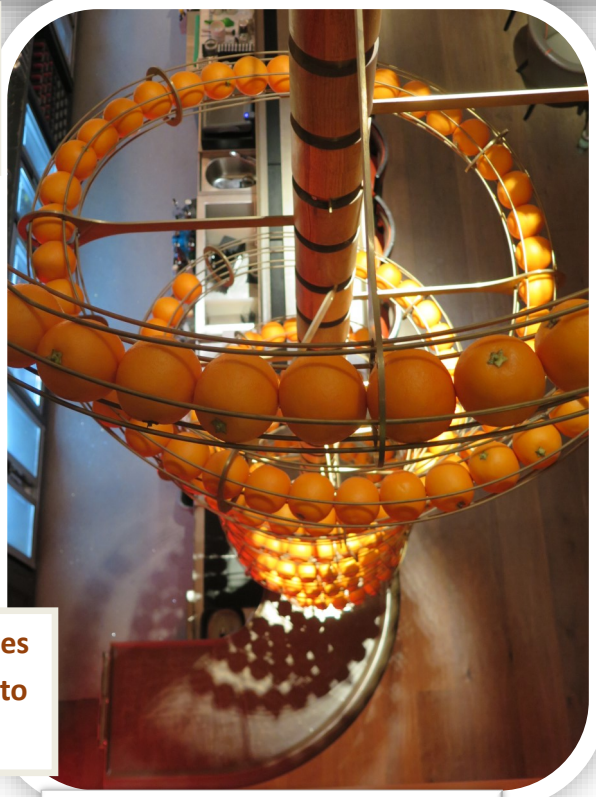
We met Angela and the kids at Pin Mill in March 2016 and had a great walk along the river ending with lunch at the Butt and Oyster watching the tide come in really fast



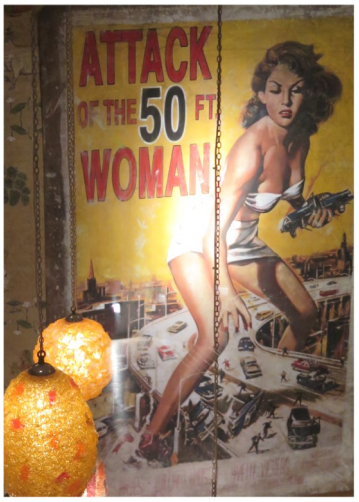
We love the ambience and décor in The Ham Yard Hotel in Picadilly. There is a drawing room and library, spa and gym, theatre, private event rooms and a 1950's style bowling alley. The rooftop terrace, another of the hotel's private events spaces, has sweeping views of the Soho skyline. The Interiors are designed by Kit Kemp award-winning modern British style.



Totally original décor throughout the hotel



Cascade of oranges down two floors to the bar



A weekend away at The delightful Howard's House Hotel in April 2016

We booked a gourmet weekend and the food and ambience were great. Walking around the Nadder valley was an added bonus

Around the village of Teffont...built in 1623 and set in the Nadder Valley, this elegant country hotel is 10 miles from Salisbury and 12.miles from Stonehenge

These inspiring statues were serenely supine In the local church

The old barns were being converted to a small function area in the lovely gardens of the hotel

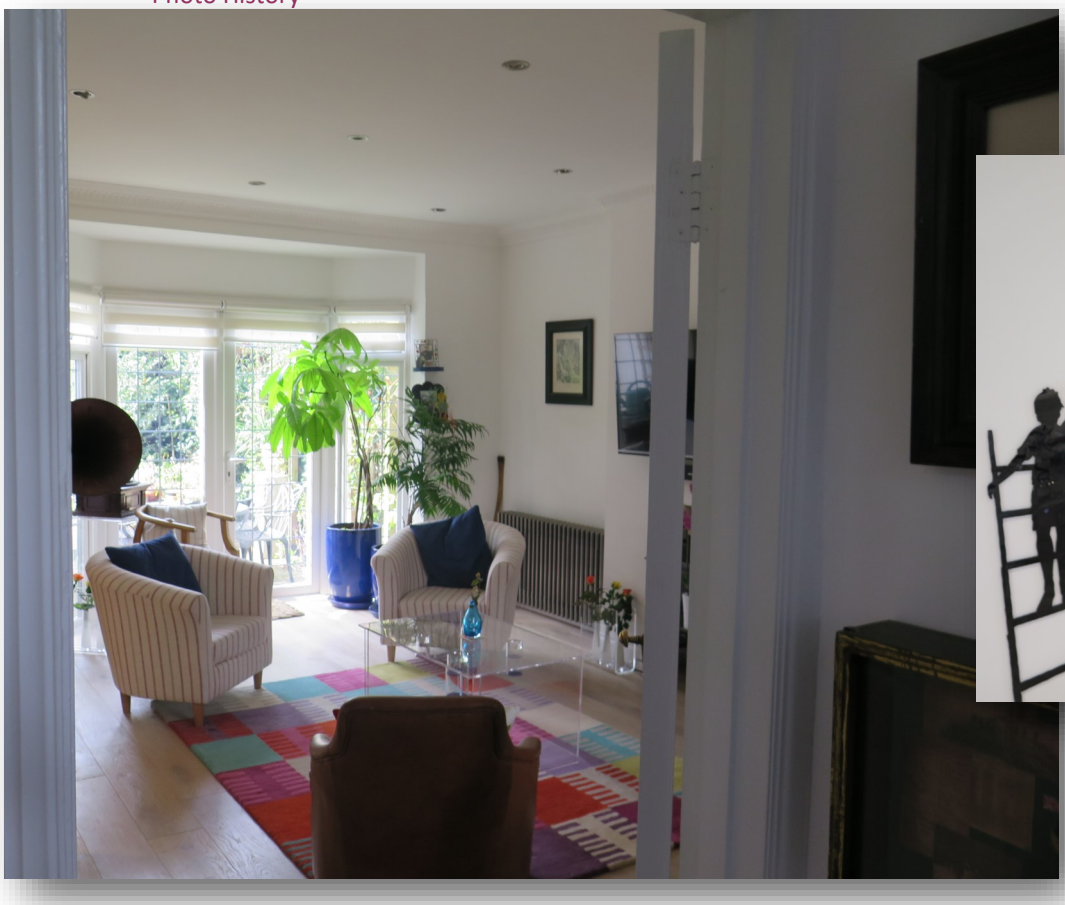
I love old farm machinery especially when it is rusting and neglected

After walking all morning we found a small local pub and there were all our fellow hotel guests (also walker who reluctantly admitted however that unlike us they had driven there)

March 2016...Jo and Lynn at home

Lynn at Vivis

After renovations



Lunch here with friends

The garden in May 2016

MAY 2016

……..

Joan

Steve

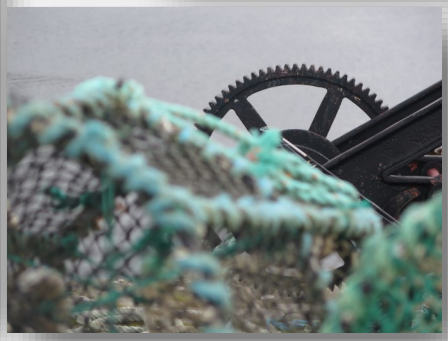
Viv

Cyril

Ros

Mike

In May 2016 we decided to Visit Skye and backpack once we were there. We got the Caledonian Express overnight from Euston to Fort William then caught another train up the west coast to Arisaig. This slow train went through some rugged and beautiful scenery. We walked the short distance to our small hotel on the quiet bay. Walking round the shore was quiet and very restful and our hotel produced an excellent meal

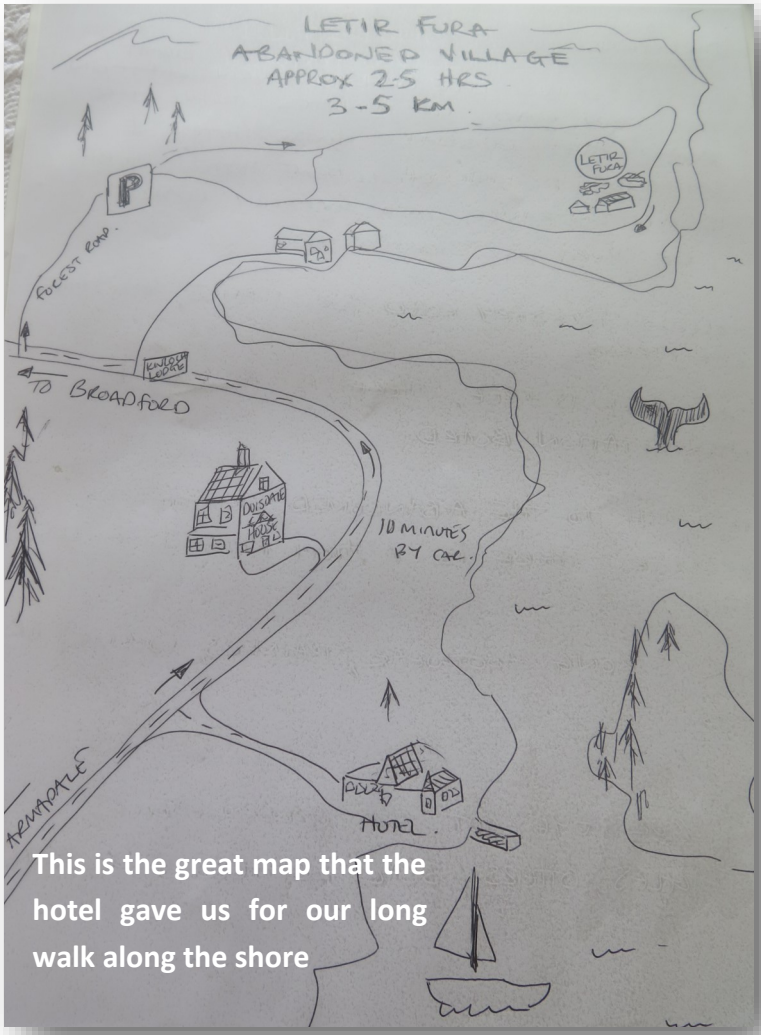


The ferry from Mallaig to Skye takes 30 minutes and docks at Armadale.

Hotel Eilean Larmain on Skye

Outside
the hotel

I love the moss-covered trees



This is the great map that the hotel gave us for our long walk along the shore

The round trip walk from the hotel through the forestry path up to the head-land took us close on 7 hours and we were totally soaked to start with and we were then attacked by every Scottish midge in Skye but the sun came out and we really arrived back totally exhausted but happy

Photo History

OMC 16M SeaNymph

August 2016

Not totally sequential as I am writing this postscript after two later books (The US roadtrip 64 & 65).but as the photos are mounting up I must keep on top of the Photo-History…where does all the time go???

While we were in the States the UK exited from the EU (known as Brexit) with Lynn and I casting our votes (to leave) prior to our vacation. For once Lynn & I appear to be politically united. We base our reasoning on the past performance and EU fiasco where all member states being , despite heated denials, only being interested in their own position with the notable exception of the UK where we seemed to be unable to negotiate ourselves out of a paper bag. A case in point is where despite being an island surrounded by seas we actually decimated our own fishing fleet causing untold misery and then we sat back and watched large Spanish trawlers fishing off our waters. This is crazy and is just one example…Very large budgets continue to be given to countries corruptly using the money and too many MEPs filling their bank accounts with their large salaries and secure jobs, albeit it in Strasbourg or Brussels…the expression 'jobs for the boys' comes to mind.

Anyway, I digress…… **BIG IS NOT BEAUTIFUL** is our mantra and if I have only learnt one thing in my entire working career it is that large organisations are like giant oil tankers…very slow to change direction and very, very slow to stop.

We both feel that slowly (yes it will take time) we can become Great Britain again with UK businesses trading throughout the world without the restrictive tariffs and agreements that are very often not in our favour. Let the profit motive be uppermost…it is known to work. Let us have a country that is rich in patriotism with citizens (whatever their original origin) working for the common good and securing a better life in the process. Yes, unchecked immigration must be rigidly curbed and I will not listen to the shit that this is racist talk. It is common sense that we are a small country compared to many others and we are overcrowded in many areas. This must be addressed…this is common sense. When will we learn ?. Assimilation by any immigrants must be a legal requirement..the ability to speak and understand English. Entry only where there is a shown way that the person has means of being self sufficient Ie with assets, skills etc. we have enough of our own home produced drains on society.

There are a few things that are so obvious to a non-political person like myself that must be addressed:

A TOTAL end to health service abuse…no legal paperwork that can be authenticated then no treatment. Any care or treatment to be paid for. The private sector manage this on a daily basis.

An end to companies and individuals hiding profits in offshore tax exempt locations and also a fair inheritance tax regime must be imposed. I paid taxes all my life, why should I pay tax on my pension and why can't I leave all my assets to whoever I want without further tax being due? When the Duke of Westminster just died his billions were all in trusts so no death duties were incurred. The more one has got the more one is able to avoid taxation. This is blatantly unfair.

Workers pensions that are paid into pension funds must be ring-fenced. This is not company money so it must be made illegal for a company to use it.

Excessive consumption of alcohol is an evil in our society but because it is such an integral part of so many peoples' lives this is overlooked and any change is deemed impossible. Cigarettes had the same cache but are now totally taboo…illustrating that major change is possible where there is a will.

On line gambling is insidiously creeping in to our lives with feel-good averts on TV and yet the amount of misery it creates with the people who can least afford this debt is hidden because vast profits are made. This must be regulated and the gambling made more difficult to access. Not long ago we had a law that prohibited people to have their wages paid in pubs because it was a problem in society when it was 'drunk away' before their families got any financial help. That was years ago…are we less caring now??

Let us have a much more concerted effort into diet education. The population is getting more and more obese and our visit to the States made us aware that there is an example of a nation with major problems emanating from such a poor diet but we are well on the way to going down that same path here in the UK. Tax on sugary drinks, gastric belts, warning on labels etc are not the initial answer. Dietary education eg showing very fit role models is probably a better way forward. A major change in our everyday diet and eating habits is now urgently required. A fast convenient food diet is so well entrenched and encouraged by the food industry that it will be a major challenge to

…….alter. This area of life can not be ignored because it hits home in later life with all the problems of an ageing population that is unfit and massively overweight with all the associated problems

Having recently personally witnessed how totally inefficient local government is, I am very worried that we have not got adequate representation locally and there are a large number of civil servants who are unaccountable and hiding behind reception screens with a well rehearsed format of avoiding what is laughingly referred to as 'customer-facing' situations. They hide behind phones and internet access and if a problem arises use phrases such as "we are sorry that you have experienced problems and we will respond within x days and assure you that we constantly endeavouring to improve our working methods"…Bullshit

All these points can be argued against saying that I am naïve but things can be changed if there is sufficient will to change. I am not politically motivated because, with very few exceptions, career politicians can do little to swim against the current. BUT if I can see the failings in our way of life and can see that changes are needed on many fronts surely others can see it too.

I am not clever enough to see all the solutions but I am very aware of the problems

Maybe if anyone reading these words in the future might say.."Ralph had some good ideas and we are actually in the process of changing these failings right now"….or am I being optimistic ??... and in reality will someone say…"Ralph was a stupid reactionary idiot and his Utopian ideas were so obviously unachievable"… One can only hope that the first scenario is the true one. I won't be around to see it so maybe my descendants will prove me right…who knows.

Well, I feel better for my moans…great therapy these outpourings.

On a personal level my great family constantly inspire me with their love, their humour and best of all their family-minded attitudes…thank you all.

Lynn, you are a wonder with the hip replacement operation only just over a week ago you are the original 'impatient patient'. Already up and walking with just one stick and down to 1 painkiller a day. Positive and determined and an inspiration to us all.

Tammy and Ben, with that double transplant looming , you are still so cheerful, enjoying life to the full together and always laughing…a great example to us all.

Larnie, coming to see Grandma the day she came home was wonderful, staying overnight was a delight and getting cooking lessons from me was an added bonus. Perhaps in my old age you can mash up my dinner and feed me through a straw. Not many 17-year old have such a great relationship with the grandparents…we are very lucky.

DP ..just spoke to you, tired out from a long trip back from entertaining refugees in camps. These displaced folk really got to you and showed what a great heart you have got…well done son,,,we are proud of you.

Beau and Peachy and Angela have just emailed from a wet and cold Harris and we all keep in touch all the time by email, Skype and texting. We hope we will see them again soon. They are so lively and lovely and are turning into really special individuals.

Sorry if this rambles on endlessly but as I always say…it is my book written for anyone who wants to read it…if it bores you..the skip to the photos..

All my love

Ralph

August 2016